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Relocating the History of Science

Essays in Honor of Kostas Gavroglu

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Editors

Relocating the History of Science

Essays in Honor of Kostas Gavroglu

 Springer

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Chapter 9

Neo-Hellenic Enlightenment: In Search of a European Identity

Manolis Patiniotis

Abstract The Neo-Hellenic Enlightenment of the late eighteenth century is a local version of the Enlightenment associated with the contact of the Greek society with the European philosophical and political thought. According to the received historiography, the exposure to the ideals of the Enlightenment consolidated the Greek national consciousness and gradually led to the great national uprising against the Ottoman rule. The aim of this chapter is to discuss the historical and intellectual circumstances under which this perception was constructed and the implications such a local historiographic enterprise might have for the Enlightenment studies at large.

Keywords Constantinos Dimaras • Europe • Adamantios Korais • Modernism • Neo-Hellenic Enlightenment • Costis Palamas

9.1 The Historiographic Problem

The question “What is Enlightenment?” is one of the most frequently asked questions in the history of philosophy. Many historians and philosophers of the modern era spent time and intellectual energy considering it. However, the variety of the answers and the wide range of qualities attributed to the Enlightenment indicate that by asking this question and answering it in a certain way, each social formation did not actually aim at retrieving the true nature of *the* Enlightenment. It

I have been working with Kostas for more than 15 years. The topic of our joint venture is the history of Greek science during the seventeenth and the eighteenth centuries. One important lesson I was taught by Kostas is that a historian should be equally concerned with historical facts *and* with the political decisions informing the received historiography. It is from this particular view that his (our) interest in the history of Neo-Hellenic Enlightenment emerged. As is, hopefully, shown, the construction of this concept represents an important chapter of the Greek national historiography. And although the ideas put forth in this chapter may slightly diverge from Kostas’s perception, I must say that they are the outcome of our common work and our long exchange on all aspects of the matter.

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rather aimed at producing a certain *image* of the Enlightenment, which reflected the particular version of modernity this formation represented. In other words, it produced a self-representation. Of course, it is quite common for the same social context to produce different and conflicting versions of the Enlightenment, but this is only a measure of the antagonisms permeating this context and the diverging priorities of the social actors (Hunt and Jacob 2003).

During the Enlightenment the self-representation and the definition of the Enlightenment coincided. The *philosophes* defined themselves by presenting their time as the age of the establishment of a new intellectual realm. But soon after the end of this period, the French Revolution initiated a different version of this interdependence. It produced an account of itself as the culmination of the ideals brought forward by the eighteenth-century philosophers and political thinkers. According to many historians, the depiction of the Enlightenment as an intellectual movement deterministically leading to a political uprising, which sought to establish a new social order, was to a great extent the outcome of the Revolution's self-narrative (Chartier 1991: 5). It is highly probable that most of the original citizens of the Republic of Letters would have serious reservations about this scenario (Outram 1995: 119).

Nineteenth-century Romanticism is another crucial instance of the Enlightenment's retrospective reconstruction. Of course, neither Romanticism nor the Enlightenment ever described themselves as homogeneous intellectual enterprises. It is important, however, that the common backdrop against which the various aspects of Romanticism perceived their distinctive identity was a highly simplistic image of the Enlightenment as an intellectual attitude, which deprived Nature of her inherent vitality and human beings of their divinely assigned freedom and ingenuity (Hamann 1784). Scientific reason became the central concept of *this* Enlightenment and the laws of Nature replaced natural law, which was dominant in the French Revolution's version of the Enlightenment.

During the first half of the twentieth century, and especially in the interwar period, the Enlightenment experienced a new transformation. This time a significant part of the European intellectual community answered the question "What is Enlightenment?" by treasuring a common philosophical and moral heritage. Scientific reason was again taken as the Enlightenment's centerpiece, but under the particular historical circumstances it mostly functioned as a model for the organization of a society threatened by the outburst of irrational beliefs and practices (Cassirer 1951 [1932]). Philosophers who handled this heritage sought to provide instructions for the correct application of scientific reasoning not only to the sciences but also to the entire sphere of social life.

Notwithstanding its lasting influence, however, this was a rather ephemeral philosophical reconstruction of the Enlightenment, as just after the World War II the *Dialectic of Enlightenment* cast a heavy shadow on the very same kind of rationality that hoped to counterbalance the interwar emerging fascism. Resonating with Romantic criticism, the authors described the Enlightenment as the climax of a long tradition of rationality, which gave birth to a Europe of social and cultural barriers, legitimized the demoralization of reason, established the blind power of

techno-science, turned knowledge against society, and led to the Holocaust. In contrast to Cassirer's *Die Philosophie der Aufklärung*, Horkheimer's and Adorno's critique did not aim at identifying and validating the intellectual and cultural setup of their era but at calling to action against its devastating consequences (Horkheimer and Adorno 1972 [1947]).

Of course, between and after the historiographic instances mentioned here there are many other major or minor resurrections of the Enlightenment. The aim of this brief review was not to examine all these instances in detail, but to show that the primary purpose of the question "What is Enlightenment?" is not to be answered once and for all; it is, rather, to motivate contemplation about the past, which produces meanings for the present. The answer given by each time and locality to this question, that is, the version of the Enlightenment each specific context produces, is the past of a particular present and reflects the attitude of the individuals towards this present. To subscribe to a specific version of the Enlightenment is not (and never was) self-evident; it has always been a matter of selection and thus inherently debatable.

And this brings us to the main theme of this paper, the neo-Hellenic Enlightenment. The facts are these.

In 1945, the historian Constantinos Dimaras (1904–1992) published a paper entitled "French Revolution and the Greek Enlightenment around 1800." In this article, the term "Greek Enlightenment," which has formed the cornerstone of modern Greek history of ideas, was introduced for the first time. Three years later the same author published his seminal work *History of Neo-Hellenic Literature* (Δημάρης 1948 & 1949). In this work he suggested a periodization of the Greek history of ideas from 1600 to 1821 that is still in use. He divided the whole period into three phases. The first phase starts around 1600 with the national and educational policy of Patriarch Kyrillos Loukaris and ends in 1669 with the end of the Ottoman expansion in the Greek-speaking regions of the Balkans. In the field of philosophy, this period was characterized by a revival of the interest in the study of nature and a synthesis between neo-Aristotelian philosophy and Christian Orthodox theology. The term "religious humanism" used by Dimaras to designate this period bears connotations of a glorious Byzantine past ("Byzantine humanism"). The second phase starts in 1670 and ends one century later (1774) with a treaty between Russia and the Ottoman Empire that broadens and secures the economic privileges of the Greek-speaking populations. The period is known as the "Century of the Phanariots," a name that reflects the increasing political impact of the social group of the learned noblemen of Constantinople. Phanariots, after having ascended the various lay offices of the Ecumenical Patriarchate, advanced themselves in the political hierarchy of the Ottoman Empire. According to Dimaras, their political program was inspired by the ideals of Enlightened Despotism, an eighteenth-century form of absolute monarchy aiming to apply the principles of rationality and toleration in administration and public issues. At the same time, they promoted an intellectual life receptive to the European—especially French—culture, so they became the first agents of modernization of the emergent Greek society. The last phase starts in 1775 and ends with the Greek war of independence in 1821.

According to Dimaras, this is the period of “Neo-Hellenic Enlightenment,” characterized by the introduction of the philosophical and scientific attainments of the European Enlightenment. Dimaras maintains that the progressive scholars of the time, seeking a rational foundation for the social life of the Greek populations of the Ottoman Empire, spread the ideas that gradually led to the great national uprising. Throughout this period, the acquaintance with the scientific ideas played a significant role in eradicating superstition, promoting a firm belief in Reason, and reviving the connection of the “enslaved” Greeks with their ancestors.

The influence of Dimaras’ historiographic contrivance has been huge. His tripartite scheme was readily incorporated into the national historiography and is active up to this date. Its most important aspect is the connection of the Greek Revolution with the intellectual awakening of the “enslaved” Greeks thanks to their exposure to the philosophical and scientific ideas of *the* Enlightenment. For most Greek historians, departing from this scheme is inconceivable: it is sober, without apparent nationalistic implications, and profoundly Eurocentric. Furthermore, the narrative structured around the notion of Neo-Hellenic Enlightenment was easily received by the broader learned public, becoming thus a constitutive part of modern Greek identity.

However, in light of recent developments in the historiography of the Enlightenment, Dimaras’ conceptualization of Neo-Hellenic Enlightenment turns out to be highly questionable. Given that there is a variety of culturally and politically laden answers to the question “What is Enlightenment?,” why did Dimaras choose, first, to incorporate the Enlightenment into the Greek historiography and, second, to opt for a particular version of the Enlightenment, especially in a period when two conflicting interpretations of the Enlightenment were in use?

9.2 Greek Identity and the Dilemmas of Modernity

Dimaras clearly and unquestionably endorses Cassirer’s Enlightenment or something quite close to it. Voltaire is his hero and the main stakes, according to his view, both in Europe and in the Ottoman Balkans, were anti-clericalism, the secularization of philosophy, and the establishment of modern science. Of course, one might argue that when Dimaras first invented the notion of Neo-Hellenic Enlightenment, the Frankfurt School critique was not yet known; thus, quite naturally he subscribed to Cassirer’s mainstream interpretation. However, Dimaras’ book, which epitomizes his research on Neo-Hellenic Enlightenment, was published much later, in the late 1970s, without indicating any change of attitude (Δημαράς 1993 [1977]); and, most importantly, Dimaras’ scheme was willingly adopted by his successors without any substantial modification of its basic assumptions. Where did this stability come from?

In this chapter a tentative interpretation is suggested, which, although needing further elaboration, indicates a promising line of research. Dimaras was a member of the so-called Generation of the 1930s. Some historians of literature are quite

reluctant to suggest a straightforward connection (Βαγενάς 2004), but none would disagree that Dimaras, beyond personal acquaintance, also shared the concerns of this avant-garde group. The Generation of the 1930s consisted primarily of poets and painters but also of essayists, novelists, architects, and theater people. During the interwar period and immediately after World War II they represented the movement of modernism in the Greek society. They shared, in many ways, the worries and anxieties of those who felt the traditional forms of self-definition both in the arts and in politics to be fading out in view of an uncertain world emerging from the dominance of technology and its accompanying economic and political balance of power. Greek modernists, however, were especially sensitive to another problem too: representing a nation that had come into existence no more than a century ago and which for various reasons had not yet clearly defined its position between East and West, they found themselves entangled in the question “Where and what have the Greeks been until these days?”

This question has recurred throughout the nineteenth century. In the late 1850s, a professor of the University of Athens, the historian Constantinos Paparrigopoulos, had produced an account that incorporated the Byzantine period into Greek history, securing thus an uninterrupted continuity of the Greek nation from early antiquity to the present. Paparrigopoulos’ novelty was not as much that he attempted to connect modern Greeks with their ancient ancestors—something that had already been attempted by European classicists and philhellenes—as that he invented a living subject, which substantiated this relationship. This subject was “Hellenism.” Paparrigopoulos introduced the terms “first Hellenism,” “Macedonian Hellenism,” “Christian Hellenism,” “Medieval Hellenism,” and “new Hellenism.” Greek history was, thus, the history of a subject, Hellenism, and its successive metamorphoses. In the course of time and, actually, in the course of the publication of Paparrigopoulos’ multivolume work, this scheme slightly altered, resulting in three Hellenisms—the first, the Medieval, and the new—but what is important after all is that now Greek history was presented as a narrative dealing with the adventures of the same subject, under different historical circumstances (Λιάκος 1994: 183–184).

During the 1930s, the construction of a consistent narrative about the fate of “new Hellenism” became imperative in view of the most important historical event of the period. The influx of the Greek-speaking populations of Asia Minor, as a result of the huge population exchange between Greece and the young Turkish Republic (1922–1928), called for a fresh look over the ideological premises of the Greek national identity. The classicist symbolism of the Greek (natural and intellectual) landscape did not suffice to incorporate the new populations, who were more familiar with an Ottoman context reminiscent of the pre-nationalistic era. If they were to be integrated into the national body, the identity of “new Hellenism” under Ottoman domination should be carefully and systematically reconsidered. If they were to be Greeks among Greeks, it should be convincingly explained how Greeks could *generally* exist in the Ottoman context during the last centuries.

While the answer to this question was still pending, the intellectuals of and around the Generation of the 1930s were prompted to tackle another dimension of the identity problem: Given the continuation of the Greek nation from ancient times

to the present, which is the position of the Greeks in a changing world and an unforeseeable future? Eighteenth-century Greece was to a great extent an ideological product of European colonialism. Without being itself a colony, it was a hybrid formation, familiar and exotic at the same time. Beyond doubt, Greece represented the ancient source of European civilization; but it also was the most contaminated part of the continent by the “oriental barbarism.” This conflicting character of the young Greek state and its ambiguous position between East and West played a significant role in the discussions about Greek identity throughout the nineteenth century. The preferred answer was that Greece belonged to the wide European family. This was not an unproblematic answer, however. If Greece were to play a role in the modern world, it should define *the way* it belonged to Europe. A whole century after the establishment of the Greek nation state, the Europeanization of Greece was primarily perceived as an act of imitation involving the danger of alienation from essential national qualities. Thus, an important task for the Generation of the 1930s was to promote cultural mutuality and to show that Greece was tied to Europe, not as an external body, but as an intrinsic constituent of European civilization (Τζιόβας 2007: 8–9).

As becomes clear from this brief survey, the interwar Greek intellectuals were faced with conflicting tasks: reclaiming the past and engaging with the future. But this was exactly the dilemma of modernity at large. The various European societies, which experienced the ideological instability caused by World War I and the end of liberal optimism, looked for ways to secure their distinctive physiognomy in a new and uncertain world order. The reassessment of tradition became imperative as a means of self-determination, but the handling of the issue caused significant inconvenience and tensions among the modernists. The Greek scholars of the 1930s were not an exception to this. Their different attitudes towards tradition prompted significantly diverging answers to the question about the place of Greek culture in the context of modernity.

The generation of the 1930s was connected with a relationship of apprenticeship to the poet Costis Palamas (1859–1943). Palamas was considered at the time a national poet and the relationship of apprenticeship primarily aimed at this aspect of his work—the “art of being a national poet:” How could one serve the national consolidation by resolving the ambiguities of national consciousness? And, under the particular circumstances, how could a poet save the European profile of his art without betraying the normative function of the Greek values? (Τζιόβας 2005: 134–135). The work in which Palamas himself tried to resolve the conflict between modernity and tradition was *The Twelve Lays of the Gipsy*, published in 1907. The poem was an inconclusive attempt, as the narrative failed to offer the much sought after *synthesis* towards a radically new quality. The tradition remained an amalgam representing the many different faces of the Greek identity: it sprang from ancient and Byzantine origins, embodied the Romantic ideal of individual freedom, and pointed to a scientific utopia as the consummation of classical reason. However, the poem clearly aimed at serving as an exemplar to be followed by Palamas’ successors in their own attempts to situate Greek culture in the context of modernity. Palamas’ vitalistic metaphors implied the possibility of tradition’s revival in ever

new contexts and forms, which according to his view comprised the essence of modernity. Modernity in this respect was a *performance* of tradition (Τζιόβας 2005: 162–163).

The Generation of the 1930s moved beyond Palamas' historicism. Reconsidering tradition might offer a possibility of adapting in a changing world, but contributing to its shaping demanded something more original. This originality was to be found in the archetypal values of the Greek identity. Tradition is simply a set of historical forms, whereas archetypal values represent the diachronic cultural mark of a people. Only by employing archetypal values could the interwar scholars hope to overcome the persistent ethnocentric perceptions of the past and become involved with their contemporary cultural developments in the European context. Thus, they invented the term “Greekness” (ελληνικότητα) and assigned to it the status of esthetic category. Greekness is not a measurable substance but an intuitive perception and a relative historical reality. It incorporates the diachronic qualities of the Greek soul, which are expressed in different ways under different historical circumstances, but remain a source of inspiration and a universal esthetic paradigm. During the 1930s scholars and artists emphasized the mythological and atmospheric dimension of these qualities. The estheticisation of the Greek landscape, and more particularly of the Aegean, is a most typical example of this intellectual attitude. After World War II they turned to a more historical perception of Greekness embodied by specific figures and periods of the Byzantine and post-Byzantine era (Τζιόβας 2007: 8; Τζιόβας 2011: 321–362): this resulted, to a significant extent, from the influence of Orthodoxy, which found its way into the modernist account as a strand that reinforced the universal claims of Greekness (Γιαννουλόπουλος 2003).

One way or the other, Greekness was called into play as a set of diachronic and universal values that would allow Greeks to participate in their contemporary intellectual exchanges as equal partners. The modernists of the 1930s felt free to appropriate the latest developments in literature, poetry, and painting, but they also promoted the Greek qualities as indispensable constituents of modernity: Greek is modern. However, notwithstanding the distance between Palamas' inconclusive synthesis and modernists' idealizations, both attempts share a common element: they seek to ensure the idea that the Greeks have always been the chosen people and their culture an archetypal culture. Most historians studying the interwar period almost exclusively focus on the different perceptions of past and future involved by each intellectual trend and the ensuing political debates of the time; but they fail to see that it was the departure from this common element which gave rise to a third answer—one that eventually gained the ground. This was Dimaras' answer.

As a historian of literature, Dimaras had meticulously studied Palamas' work and, actually, published his studies two years before the publication of his article on the “Greek Enlightenment.” The relationship between the two scholars, however, went through two different phases. In 1930, in a book review, Dimaras stated: “Our generation, in the years of its formation, was so much inspired and shaped by Palamas' work that no blame against his poems' form can gain our consent: We had been watered by his inspiration, we experienced the rhythm of his verses, we adopted his phrasal modes” (cited in Βαγενάς 2004). Six years later, he was less

enthusiastic and more cautious. He was aware that the poet was able to capture the Greek drama, the “contradictions permeating the Greek soul,” but he was unable to resolve them. Thus, he aphoristically asserted that “in order for our nation to stand up, we must reach the exquisite end of a mentality [viz. Palamas’ intellectual attitude], which we shall reject to survive” (cited in Δρούλια 1994: 14).

Dimaras rejected Palamas’ inconclusive synthesis but he also followed a different path from his contemporary modernists. Through a complex intellectual process, the young Christian philosopher of the twenties turned to an atheist (“indifferentist”) historian in the early thirties, who gradually shifted his research focus from the history of literature to the history of ideas. This process has not yet been investigated, neither can it be discussed in the context of this chapter, but it is important that it led to a unique synthesis, which marked recent Greek historiography.

Dimaras took up Paparrigopoulos’ notion of “new Hellenism,” but his aim was not to single out the Greek history or culture. He rather intended to accommodate the still unstable modern Greek identity in a secure social and ideological context. This context was Europe: the Greeks were intrinsically connected with the “European people” because the values of the classical Greek civilization lie in the foundations of Enlightenment’s Europe. “Through the humanism of the classics, which shaped European civilization, Dimaras sought to establish that the Greek tradition was an inseparable part of the common European tradition, in other words that the Greeks should at last realize that they were Europeans and conversely, that the Westerners should gain access to Neo-Hellenic science [sic]” (Δρούλια 1994: 19).

Dimaras was not primarily concerned with the uninterrupted continuation of the Greeks from the antiquity to his days, as was Paparrigopoulos, but he was indeed concerned with the awakening of the national self-consciousness of the “enslaved” Greeks during the last decades of the eighteenth century. This awakening occurred thanks to the contact of the Greek intellectual life with the Enlightenment. People traveling westwards and ideas traveling eastwards made the Greeks realize that they were heirs of the very same values, which flourished in the atmosphere of the Enlightenment, but could not find a proper grounding in their own society. And it was this double awareness, motivated by the paradigm of the European (particularly French) Enlightenment—the awareness of their own heritage and, at the same time, of the nonfulfillment of their historical mission because of the Ottoman rule—that activated their reflexes and led to the Greek Revolution.

As a consequence—a rather peculiar consequence—the nation state that resulted from the Greek Revolution was a “nation of the Enlightenment,” as a historian recently called it (Ελεφάντης 2007). *Dimaras’ major achievement was that he answered the question of modernity by merging the fate of “new Hellenism” with the fate of Europe. And the period during which this merging primarily took place was the Enlightenment.*

9.3 The Making of the Enlightenment

Dimaras was not only a skillful historian but also a capable manager. In this capacity he played a crucial role in the establishment of his historiographic scheme. As early as 1942, in a series of newspaper articles, Dimaras had suggested “the most general lines of a research project aiming at the study of the Greek literature primarily during Turcocracy [viz. the Ottoman rule].” He outlined the intellectual tasks that should be undertaken for Neo-Hellenic studies to be established and the “national census” required for the consolidation of the Greek national self-consciousness. He suggested the foundation of new institutions, the publication of new journals, and the establishment of scientific societies. The “national census” involved, among other things, biographies of the leading figures of the pre-Revolutionary era, catalogues of books and journals, records of Greek schools functioning at the period, and lists of scientific and philosophical translations that channeled the European thought into the Greek intellectual life. Above all, Dimaras stressed the need for an “Organization comprised of a big number of properly trained researchers providing all means necessary for the intensive performance of their work” (Δρούλια 1994: 17).

This organization came to life in 1959. Dimaras was instrumental in setting up the Royal (and later National) Hellenic Research Foundation, of which he was the first executive director. One of NHRF’s first institutes was the Center for Neohellenic Research, devoted, as its name implies, to the study of “new Hellenism.” Dimaras recruited and trained a significant number of promising historians, whose mission was to unearth and file all the documents testifying to the contact of new Hellenism with the West, and especially with the Enlightenment. As he had planned it 20 years earlier, he organized the publication of biographies and correspondences, and he edited himself or supervised the edition of the unpublished papers of the major figures of Neo-Hellenic Enlightenment. His organizational work was huge. He researched, wrote, directed, supervised, and coordinated; and, on top of all these contributions, he had a continuous presence in the press as a columnist for no less than 60 years. Taking some distance from his work and asking what was the purpose of this prolific activity, we may quite securely answer: to shape and promote the construct of Neo-Hellenic Enlightenment.

Besides administration and management, however, Dimaras was a very skillful historian. Shaping the construct of neo-Hellenic Enlightenment required a focused theoretical work, and he undertook to do much of this work himself. His most important tool was analogy. To support the idea that in the emergent Greek society of the eighteenth-century Ottoman Empire an Enlightenment took place almost simultaneously with the great French Enlightenment, he needed to establish analogies with the European societies of the time (Αποστολόπουλος 1994: 73–74). This was not an easy task, because it is hardly possible to talk of an Italian or a German society during the eighteenth century, let alone of a single and homogeneous society in countries whose social fabric was already interwoven with a multitude of colonial social contexts. Thus, Dimaras focused mostly on the French society and

partly on Frederic's Prussia and Catherine's Russian Empire. What he discovered there was a society basically consisting of three groups (or classes or strata, depending on the ideological predilections of his disciples). One group was the clergy, deeply conservative and in principle anti-philosophical. The other group was connected with the state administration and the nobility. It consisted of people who, although they did not subscribe openly to the Enlightenment, displayed a favorable attitude towards its major representatives. The political expression of this group was the so called Enlightened Despotism, as it was personified by Frederick II and Catherine the Great. The third group was the emerging bourgeoisie, which enrolled the philosophers and political thinkers of the Enlightenment to create the intellectual context of its future dominance. This latter group was the actual social basis of the Enlightenment.

Speaking of "Greek society" in the context of the Ottoman Empire is also quite problematic. Throughout the eighteenth century, the Greek-speaking Orthodox populations of the Balkans not only lacked the institutional structure of a nation state; they also lacked the geographic continuity that could form the basis for a unification of their social activities. The "Greek society" consisted of a network of sites where Greek-speaking populations pursued various economic and political enterprises. Besides the Balkans, the Greek communities were dispersed along the main commercial routes of Eastern Europe, and within the most important cities of the Northern Italian peninsula, the Hapsburg Empire, and the German states. There were only two strong unifying elements which differentiated these populations from others and assigned them a certain degree of integrity: the Christian Orthodox faith and Greek-speaking education. Both were under the jurisdiction of the same authority, the Ecumenical Patriarchate of Constantinople, but both were also colored by the particularities of the various local communities. In this capacity, education and Church hosted all kinds of fermentation, negotiations, and collective pursuits concerning the emergent society's political and intellectual identity (Patiniotis 2008: 265–266). Within this loose and multifaceted formation Dimaras and his followers implanted the class system of the Western societies, however idealized.

The clergy was represented by the Ecumenical Patriarchate, conservative, anti-philosophical, and anti-scientific; with many exceptions, of course, but still on the antipodes of progress and social emancipation (Ηλίου 1988). It is highly revealing that historians working in the context of Dimaras' scheme investigate the debates about the heliocentric system in Greek intellectual space and discuss the resistance of the Church, when we know that such resistance was rare and the few debates that occurred were mostly motivated by personal antagonisms and not by the official policy of the Ecumenical Patriarchate (Αγγέλου 1988).

The nobility did not exist in the "Greek society," significantly because there was no hereditary nobility in the Ottoman Empire. Thus, it had to be invented. The Phanariots, the self-made entrepreneurs who turned their wealth into political offices, both in the court of the Ecumenical Patriarchate and in the hierarchy of the Sublime Porte, were molded to fit a historically intermediate agent demanded by the scheme of Neo-Hellenic Enlightenment. On the one hand, they formed a concise

expression of the emergent Greek society's dynamism and, on the other, they cross-fertilized an intellectually dormant society with the new trends of Western philosophy, science, and literature. The political aspirations of the Phanariots, according to the received historiography, were closely tied to the tradition of the Enlightened Despotism, and many of them had the chance to implement its principles as governors of the semiautonomous regions of Moldova and Wallachia (Δημαράς 1993: 7–10, 222–224, 263–282, et al.).

The problem of the bourgeoisie was solved in a similar manner. Strictly speaking, it is impossible to locate in the eighteenth century a Greek bourgeois class comparable to the British, the French, or the Dutch ones. But there were indeed dynamic merchants, who traveled across Europe to transfer commodities from the Ottoman lands to the industrial markets of Europe and bring back other commodities or luxury items. Despite the fact that the Greek identity of these people is highly questionable (they were Balkanians rather than Greeks) and that they were generally indifferent to philosophy and higher education (Stoianovich 1960; Κατσιαρδής-Hering 1995), they were recruited by Dimaras' historiography to bring the Enlightenment to the Balkans. No doubt among them there were indeed learned men who became involved with intellectual pursuits and patrons who sponsored the establishment of schools and the publication of books. But such sporadic incidents do not suffice to make the traveling merchants representatives of the spirit of the Enlightenment. For Dimaras and his followers, this issue goes usually unquestioned (Δημαράς 1993: 27–28, 154, 310–314, et al.).

Having established analogies with the European “societies,” which nurtured the Enlightenment, Dimaras needed to take one last step: to find the voice of the Enlightenment within the Greek society. This voice was a man who lived—where else?—in Paris, sympathized with the political philosophy of the Enlightenment, was an eye-witness of the French Revolution, and defended the use of common language in the Greek intellectual life: Adamantios Korais (1748–1833).

Korais was the personification of *synthesis*. As a disciple of Palamas, Dimaras was especially concerned with this concept. Synthesis epitomized the process that led to the shaping of new Hellenism through the convergence of a variety of cultural elements. Thus, as he puts it in his *History of Neo-Hellenic Literature*, Yianis Vilaras (1771–1823) and Athanasios Christopoulos (1772–1847), two major poets of the eighteenth century, *performed* synthesis not only because their work integrated a variety of dispersed literary elements, but also because their personality represented the new kind of man inspired by the ideals of freedom and national emancipation. But the person who performed synthesis in the most complete way was Adamantios Korais. Although he did not belong to the realm of literature, he was a key figure whose work and personality managed to express “all the dispersed but active proclivities of new Hellenism as we perceive it today” (Αποστολίδου 1994: 135).

The history of neo-Hellenic Enlightenment, as laid out by Dimaras and his followers, is a narrative, which naturally leads to Korais. According to this narrative, in the early nineteenth century, all intellectual currents pointing to the direction of the forthcoming national uprising emanated from Korais' sphere of

influence. All the progressive forces of the Greek society were inspired by his political thought and implemented his advice to “channel” the European attainments in philosophy and the sciences into the Greek society (Δημάρζης 1993: 106–119, 301–389). It is true that scientifically or philosophically Korais was not as competent as other eighteenth-century scholars. Neither was he a really representative figure of his time, as were Eugenios Voulgaris (1716–1806) or Iosipos Misiodax (1725/1730–1800). But he was indeed one of the few Greek scholars who were not ordained clergymen. He criticized the backwardness of the Orthodox Church (and was excommunicated for this reason) and insisted on the abolition of the Phanariots’ power networks to free space for the political action of the emerging bourgeois groups. In Dimaras’ eyes, Korais was the Greek Voltaire.

9.4 Conclusion: A Dream of Europe

The claim put forward in this paper, which is still a working hypothesis, is that Dimaras constructed and manned the Greek Enlightenment to secure the position of the Greek nation state within Europe. He gave up the leading role of the Greek culture in exchange for a steady orbit in the European firmament: Greeks are not the first anymore, but they have always been among the first by hereditary right, and the events of their recent history, *the history of new Hellenism*, show how they came to rediscover their natural position after a long period of self-alienation.

One important historiographic consequence of Dimaras’ choice (although not his own innovation) is that it radically cut off recent Greek history from its Balkan and Ottoman contexts. The creation of the Greek nation state appears to be the result of a series of influences, exchanges, decisions, and debates, which took place exclusively within the Greek context. This complex process eventually gave birth to a nation state, which quite plausibly, as already mentioned, could be called a “nation of the Enlightenment.” Thus, Dimaras moved beyond the problematic and inconclusive recurrence of tradition (Palamas) on the one hand and the vague and unstable estheticisation of Greekness (Generation of the 1930s) on the other. He shaped recent Greek history in a way that it persuasively appears to be a genuinely Greek matter long before the establishment of the Greek nation state. And when this state eventually came into being, it appeared to be already naturally placed in the world of modernity: Greece and Europe are intimately tied and so are their political and cultural fates.

Dimaras’ Neo-Hellenic Enlightenment was the winning—sober and convincing—response to the interwar debates about the fate of Hellenism in the new world order emerging from the crisis of modernity. As a historian put it recently: “What do we owe to Dimaras? That he was the first who systematically studied the fact that ideas and principles of the movement, which in Europe became known as the Enlightenment, flowed to the area of the ‘Greek Orient’; that he founded the view that the Neo-Hellenic Enlightenment was not an autochthonous phenomenon, but a branch of the European Enlightenment; that he organized the respective research in

Greece and took care to connect the Greek society with international science” (Αποστολόπουλος 2004).

There is more, however. If for a moment we change perspective and place Dimaras’ answer in the broader context of the Enlightenment’s historiography, we realize that his enterprise has had some more pervasive consequences. Through their attempts to establish a local version of the Enlightenment, Dimaras and his followers produced a stereotypical account of what they considered to be the Enlightenment *par excellence*.

- Voltaire is the paradigmatic scholar of the Republic of Letters and Montesquieu the paradigmatic political thinker.
- The main aim of the *philosophes* was to fight superstition and ignorance and their most obstinate opponent was the conservative clergy.
- The presence of science and its accompanying empiricism in a society is a measure of its cultural maturity: the more inclined to scientific thinking and the more distant from the Aristotelian scholasticism, the closer to the Enlightenment.
- The Enlightenment leads to Revolution. It happened in France, it also happened in Greece.
- And, above all, the paradigmatic Enlightenment is the French Enlightenment. Speaking of Enlightenment means to examine how and to what extent a society adopted the *civilizational* patterns induced by the great French intellectual movement.

We started with the assumption that Dimaras endorsed Cassirer’s interpretation of the Enlightenment. But this is not actually Cassirer’s Enlightenment. It is rather a locally produced model, which fits the Greek case and is *projected back* on the great mural of the *Enlightenments*. In fact, beyond great narratives, and the image of a well-defined movement which shaped modern Europe, the idea we have, at any moment, about the Enlightenment is the product of such local appropriations: A vague and multiply distorted reflection of the discourses produced by various social formations in their bid to become integrated into an imagined entity representing the political ideals of modernity. Dimaras’ quest for Europe is a typical example of this process, highly revealing of the powers involved in the shaping of the Enlightenment.

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